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UNCLAS COLOMBO 002038

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SUBJECT: MALDIVES: PROPOSED LETTER FROM SECRETARY TO  
PRESIDENT GAYOOM ON DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

REF: A. COLOMBO 1680

[B](#). COLOMBO 1953

[C](#). COLOMBO 2025

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 2.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Maldives has made some progress in implementing democratic reforms, but significant problems, including limitations on the opposition and on pro-opposition media, as detailed in Reftels B and C, remain. The Maldives is a moderate, pro-Western Muslim nation which has proven receptive to international pressure in the past. The Maldives is now at a crossroads in its reform process. As the political reform process has developed over the past two years, we have used the relationship of friendship and trust we have developed between the US and Maldives to nudge the process along. President Gayoom values our input and support because the US is perceived as a friend which wants to assist Maldives in its difficult progress. In light of our priorities outlined in Reftel A, we believe that this is an opportune time for the Secretary to send a letter to President Gayoom that commends the progress achieved so far and underscores our concern that the process continue to move forward. Draft text follows below.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Begin draft text:

Dear President Gayoom:

I would like to congratulate you on the progress the Government of Republic of Maldives has made so far in the democratic reform process. The conduct of elections in January despite the tragedy of the December 2005 tsunami, the registration of political parties in June, the marked improvement in prison conditions over the past year, and efforts to broaden freedom of the press are all very encouraging signs.

I understand that both the Dhivehi Rai'yyithunge Party and the Maldivian Democratic Party will hold their first party congresses soon. I applaud you for encouraging these peaceful political activities, which build democratic capacity and permit Maldivians to engage in political processes. I also note with interest the formation of a Judicial Services Commission, aimed at promoting judicial independence from the executive. I look forward to seeing evidence of this independence in the work of Commission in the months ahead.

While your government has taken some critical steps forward, the need for greater progress in other crucial areas persists. My Government remains concerned about the harsh sentence given to activist Jennifer Latheef and the judicial proceedings against Maldivian Democratic Party Chairperson Mohamed Nasheed. These actions have fueled perceptions that the judicial system is being used to penalize political dissent.

I know that your Government is attempting to address inadequacies in your current legal system by drafting a new penal code, as well as by revising criminal and civil procedural codes. The United States Government commends these efforts. Next steps, such as bringing the penal code before the People's Majlis and implementing the recommended procedures as soon as possible, will be crucial in dispelling the perception that the existing criminal code may be susceptible to political manipulation.

With all of the changes under way, Maldives is at a vital turning point. There are great responsibilities upon you and upon the political opposition. If your country continues forward on the path to progress you initiated, Maldives can stand as an encouraging example to other nations seeking to democratize, and you will have given all Maldivians a tremendous legacy for the future. We await further democratic developments in Maldives with great interest.

End draft text.

LUNSTEAD